

About a year after Kūkai's entombment one of his disciples, Jichie, sent a message about the master's passing to Ch'ing-lung Temple in Ch'ang-an, where Kūkai had received instruction from Hui-kuo. "We feel in our hearts as if we had swallowed fire," Jichie wrote, "and our tears gush forth like fountains. Being unable to die, we are guarding the place where he passed away" (*MW*, 6).

During the ensuing years this watchful bereavement gave way to a generally held belief that Kūkai had not died, at least not in any familiar sense. Instead, he had entered into a profound meditation for the benefit of humankind and all living creatures. This sustained *samādhi* presumably would continue until Mikoku Bosatsu, the future Buddha, arrived upon the earth. Meanwhile, Kūkai's spirit was thought capable of going abroad in the nation, providing spiritual aid and a shadowy companionship to all who called upon him.

Today at Kōyasan, on October 4 of each year, a ceremony is held in the Golden Hall to pay tribute to Emperor Saga. Although Saga granted Kūkai's request to build a monastery on Kōyasan, Saga himself never visited there—unless one wishes to give credence to a story that during Saga's funeral in Heian-kyō in 842 the coffin containing the emperor's body disappeared for a brief period, flying off southward to Kōya mountain. There in the forest glen beside the Tamagawa Kūkai is said to have interrupted his meditation, come forward from his tomb, and performed the proper Shingon funeral obsequies over his imperial friend.⁸⁰

CHAPTER FOUR

TWELVE CENTURIES ON THE MOUNTAIN

ABBOT KANGEN VISITS THE TOMB (835-921)

For the task of carrying on the management and continuing construction at Kōyasan Kūkai had selected his thirty-year-old nephew Shinzen (804-891; also known as Shinnen). Under Shinzen's direction the primary architectural feature of the Garan courtyard, the massive Dairō, was completed, along with a number of other buildings, including a hall devoted to the veneration of Kūkai. Shinzen also oversaw the development of a program in Dharma transmission for student monks. This program, called the *dempō-e*, was a practical enactment of Kūkai's wish that the mountain be devoted above all else to meditation and religious education. In 883, toward the end of his life, Shinzen submitted a formal statement to Emperor Yōzei in which he called Kōyasan a true paradise of the Buddhas, an echo of Kūkai's original petition to Emperor

Saga. Following his death at Chū-in at the age of eighty-eight Shinzen's ashes were enshrined at a spot immediately to the rear of today's Kongōbu-ji headquarters.

Overall, Kūkai was wise in his selection of his Dharma heirs, and certainly he left them many competitive advantages. They were strategically positioned in the capital. They possessed a large body of his analytical writings, as well as many of the treasures he had brought back from China. Above all they had received directly from Kūkai the required oral teachings that they could pass on to their own disciples. But the pursuit of further knowledge, especially from China, continued. In 1836, the year immediately following Kūkai's *myōjō*, both Shinzei and Shinzen attempted to go to China, but their ship was wrecked in a storm. Two years later another pair of Shingon priests, Jōkyō (d. 866) and Engyō (799–852), made successful journeys, returning the following year. E-un (798–869) went to China in 842 and stayed for five years, returning with a large collection of esoteric materials. Twenty years after that, in 862, Shūei (809–884) and Shinnyō (?–865?), the latter Kūkai's disciple and a former Imperial Prince-Regent, traveled to China. Shūei sailed home after three years with an impressive collection of materials, after which he became head priest at Tō-ji and an active ritualist at the imperial court. Shinnyō stayed on for a time in China, then lost his life in an attempt to reach India. These trips enlarged the Shingon treasury of esoteric texts and also enhanced the prestige of Shingon leadership. But the competition was equally active. Two talented Tendai priests, Ennin (794–864; posthumously Jikaku Daishi) and Enchin (814–891; a nephew of Kūkai), also made voyages to China during these years, and upon their return were so successful in further transforming Tendai in an esoteric direction that by the close of the ninth century Tendai had risen to an even footing with Shingon in its mastery of Mikkyō.¹

With continued internal expansion there inevitably developed certain minor divisions within the Shingon sect. One source of division was Kūkai's failure to establish any one temple as the definitive administrative headquarters for the rest. A more fundamental cause of divisiveness, one endemic to Buddhism generally, was the custom of passing on the faith by means of direct transmission from master to pupil, and then subsequently to further masters and pupils. Such transmissions invariably introduced subtle variations in both dogma and practice. Soon major

new Shingon temples, such as Daikaku-ji (founded in 876), Daigo-ji (in 876), and Ninna-ji (in 887), were moving in slightly independent directions, all honoring Kūkai's teachings, but each with its own evolving special methods and loyalties. Ninna-ji became the center of a "Hirosawa" school of Shingon-shū. Daigo-ji inaugurated the "Ono" School. Over the next several centuries these two schools in turn would split into a multiplicity of subtly variant sub-schools, until by the fifteenth century there were some seventy distinguishable "styles" of Shingon.²

The young monks who studied for the priesthood in Shinzen's Kōyasan program were formally ordained at Tōdai-ji in Nara, after which they were required to return to Kōyasan for six more years of training. During these six years they were forbidden to leave the mountain. Later, when the Nara ordination examinations were switched to Tō-ji, an increasing number of Kōyasan's young priests chose not to return for the rigorous follow-up stint on the mountain. In an attempt to reduce these defections Kōyasan applied to the imperial court for permission to administer its own examinations. Tō-ji intervened, however, protesting that such an arrangement negated its own assumed primacy in regulating Shingon religious training. In time the court ended the wrangling by allowing each of the major Shingon temples to train and examine its own priests, thus further reducing the need for mutual cooperation.

Kōyasan, from the beginning a fragile enterprise, was no more than just holding its own when overtaken in the early tenth century by a series of damaging events. In 912 a vigorous new chief priest at Tō-ji, Kangen (853–925), asked Kōyasan's chief priest, Mukū (?–918), to return some notes written by Kūkai that earlier had been borrowed from Tō-ji. Mukū refused the request, and when the court demanded he accede to it, Mukū fled Kōyasan, taking Kūkai's precious scrolls with him. Shortly thereafter Kangen was given full authority over both Kōyasan and Daigo-ji, while retaining his post as chief priest of Tō-ji. With this expanded power Kangen quickly established Tō-ji as the undisputed head Shingon temple. Additionally, Kōyasan's cherished *denpō-e* program for training its own priests was terminated. The student monks, finding themselves no longer supported, began drifting away from the mountain. Their teachers soon followed, until by 917 Kōyasan was virtually empty of priests and monks. It seemed that Kūkai's cherished dream for the mountain monastery was being abandoned.

But in this dark hour a very salutary event occurred.

For some time the feeling had grown among Shingon priests everywhere that the state had not properly honored Kūkai's greatness. Back in 866 the court had posthumously elevated Saichō, the founder of Tendai, to a newly defined highest rank, *Hain-daikashō-i* ("Dharma-seal Great Master"), but after more than fifty years Kūkai had not been similarly honored.³ So in 919 Abbot Kangen (now head of Tō-ji, Kōyasan, and Daigo-ji) petitioned the court to award Kūkai its highest posthumous rank. At the same time Ex-Emperor Uda (867-931; r. 887-897), a Kūkai enthusiast who had made the capital's Ninnaji into an influential Shingon monastery, also petitioned the court. On October 27, 921, the petitions were granted.

Shortly thereafter, in accordance with custom, imperial envoy Prince Shunmyū, together with Abbot Kangen and several other priests, made the journey to Kōyasan. While standing before Kūkai's tomb the prince read aloud the formal document of award. Henceforth Kūkai would be known as Kōbō Daishi, "Dharma-spreading Great Teacher." At the same time Abbot Kangen directed toward Kūkai a new chant of praise and trust: *Namu Daishi Henjō Kongō*. The juxtaposition of the two tributes made for a powerful occasion.

What occurred next—or at least later was reported to have occurred—was to change Kōyasan's future. Prince Shunmyū and Abbot Kangen had brought with them a "yellowish brown" monastic robe, a gift from Emperor Daigo, for a symbolic robe-changing ceremony. One account tells us that months earlier, before receiving Kangen's petition on Kūkai's behalf, Emperor Daigo himself had encountered Kūkai in a dream. In this dream Kūkai related in verse that he was still inhabiting his body on Kōyasan and that for the past eighty-four years had been traveling ceaselessly among the people of Japan to spread the teachings of the Buddha. In consequence his monk's robe had become dreadfully threadbare.

On Mount Kōya,

As I continue to sit in my room,

My very sleeves in ratters,

Beneath the darkness of moss. . . .⁴

Holding the replacement robe before him, Abbot Kangen bowed toward Kūkai's tomb. The stones that blocked the entrance were removed. We are told that upon first viewing the interior Kangen saw only a heavy mist. Five times he prostrated himself and cried out.

Ever since I was born out of the womb of my merciful mother
and allowed to become a disciple of my venerable master, I have
offended none of the Buddha's Precepts. Why am I not permitted
to see . . . ?

Upon this appeal the obscuring mist lifted and Kūkai's form "appeared like the moon through the rifts in the clouds." Kangen and the prince washed Kūkai's body, shaved his hair and beard, just as his disciples had done eight decades earlier, and solemnly re clothed the body with the new robe. Beads from the rosary, which had scattered about the floor of the chamber, were gathered up, restrung, and placed in Kūkai's left hand.

During these proceedings a young assisting priest named Junyū failed entirely to see Kūkai's form. In response to Junyū's torment Abbot Kangen took Junyū's hand and placed it on Kūkai's knee. The young man still saw only darkness, but from that moment forward his hand became fragrant and remained so for the rest of his life.⁵

There is another twist to the story. After the resealing of the cave Kangen was crossing back over the Tamagawa when he sensed the presence of a figure behind him. Turning about, he saw Kōbō Daishi (for that was now his name) standing at the farther end of the bridge with his hands held in a gesture of blessing. Abbot Kangen put his own hands together and bowed toward the Daishi, thanking him. Daishi answered: "Kangen, it is not for you alone that I am here, but also for every creature that possesses the Buddha nature."

Thus, Kōbō Daishi affirmed to Kangen his ongoing role as savior to the nation and to all sentient beings. He was not dead, nor was he absent in some remote heaven. He was alive in this world, and ubiquitously so. As news of the wonder spread, Kōyasan, already regarded by some as a symbolic paradise, became known as the place where the living Kōbō Daishi could be encountered directly. This new belief would play an

important role in Kôyasan's eventual restoration, although not at once. First there were fires.

JÔYO, FUJIWARA MICHINAGA, AND
EX-EMPEROR SHIRAKAWA (921-1129)

After Kangen's closing of the schools very little seemed to go right on the mountain. Several buildings were reconstructed and repaired with funds supplied by aristocratic supporters. Some agricultural estates were designated as sources of revenue. But the full training program for monks was not reestablished. Kôyasan existed, but not as Kûkai had envisioned. Then came a series of fires. In 933, a decade after the robe-changing at the tomb, and virtually on the eve of the celebration of Kôbô Daishi's one-hundredth year in *samādhi*, flames consumed the mausoleum structure above the place of burial. In 952 lightning struck and destroyed the worship hall that served the mausoleum. In 994 a truly great fire, also started by lightning, swept through the Garan, the main temple area.⁶ After consuming the Great Stupa the flames advanced outward in all directions, burning nearly every building of the Garan, finally spreading to the priests' residences in the *tani* to the north, south, and east. Among the more significant buildings only the Miedô survived. With the mountain now virtually uninhabitable, a decision was made to haul the surviving temple treasures down the mountain for storage at Jison-in. When this task was completed, Kôyasan was closed.⁷

For a stretch of twenty-two years the mountain remained empty. Then in 1016 a sixty-year-old itinerant priest named Jôyo (958-1047) made his first visit to Kôyasan, prompted by a vision he experienced during a seventeen-day meditation at Hase-dera.⁸ This vision revealed to Jôyo that Kôyasan, although choked with weeds, was in reality the Tushita heaven of Mikoku, and that his own deceased parents now awaited him there. Upon climbing the mountain Jôyo discovered Kôyasan to be desolate indeed, with most of its buildings in ruins. He proceeded to the Okunoin and lit a lamp before Kôbô Daishi's tomb. In the saint's presence he vowed to begin the work of restoration.

Gradually Jôyo recruited a group of loyal monks and started reconstructing some of the halls. He designed a fireplace (called a *tsuchimuro*)

that heated temple rooms so successfully that his followers could forego the usual winter retreat to Amano and Jison-in. In Jôyo's sixth year at Kôyasan the great Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1027), for three decades the most powerful man in Japan, made a pilgrimage appearance. Michinaga's journey was prompted by his having asked a close collaborator of Jôyo's, Abbot Ningai of Ono, if Kôyasan truly should be called the Paradise of the Buddhas. Ningai, who had lived at Kôyasan for thirty-four years, answered that the mountain was indeed the paradise "where sacred ones from all the directions dwell for ever and the Buddhas of past, present, and future stay."⁹ Inspired by Ningai's assurances, Michinaga, an enthusiastic devotee of Mikoku, decided to see for himself.

At Kôbô Daishi's tomb Michinaga is said to have experienced the miracle of a face-to-face meeting (the saint's "head had a bluish tinge, the robe looked clean and new, and the color of the skin was remarkable").¹⁰ Immediately afterward Michinaga donated funds to rebuild both the veneration hall at the tomb and the nearby bridge over the Tamagawa. To sustain the veneration hall he donated farmland on the south bank of the Kinokawa near Jison-in. In the earth before the tomb he had several sūtras buried, among them one copied in his own hand. His prayer was that after death he himself might be reborn in Mikoku's Tushita heaven.¹¹

Inspired by Michinaga's example and by varying accounts of Kôbô Daishi's miraculous survival, other Fujiwara climbed the mountain to make their own offerings. One of Michinaga's daughters, although forbidden to enter Kôyasan proper, had her hair cut off and buried in front of the mausoleum. By the time of Jôyo's death (in 1047 at Shakamon-in, near today's Reihōkan Museum) Kôyasan had become repopulated. Many of its lost buildings had been replaced, among them Chû-in, Kôbô Daishi's home temple.¹²

In the Miedô today hang portraits of Kôbô Daishi's closest disciples. Also there is Jôyo's portrait, an acknowledgment of his role as the mountain's second founder. In the Lantern Hall before Kôbô Daishi's tomb stands a lamp said to be the one Jôyo lit upon first arriving at Kôyasan. Jôyo, who came to Kôyasan largely out of devotion to his deceased parents, is credited with having instituted *higan* services at the Miedô, an augury of Kôyasan's future development as one of the nation's great centers for memorializing the dead.

Starting in 1059 members of the imperial family began following the example of the nobility and aristocracy in making pilgrimages to Kôyasan. Prince Shôshin, the fourth son of Emperor Sanjô, was the first to come. He later built himself a residence on the bank of the Tamagawa just north of the bridge to the mausoleum. The most celebrated of the imperial ascents was made in 1088 by the grandly devout Ex-Emperor Shirakawa (1053-1129; r. 1073-1087), already described in the introduction to this book.¹³ In addressing Kôbô Daishi, Shirakawa acted in conscious imitation of the kings of India who witnessed the Buddha's sermons on Vulture Peak. After rebuilding the Great Stûpa (in 1103), which had burned ninety-one years earlier, Shirakawa returned to the mountain to donate further estates for its ongoing support. Then, in 1124, accompanied by his grandson Ex-Emperor Toba, Shirakawa visited Kôyasan for a fourth time to witness the dedication ceremony for the Garan's reconstructed eastern and western stûpas (the Tôrô and Sairô). Shirakawa's devotion to Kôyasan was so great that some speculated he was a reincarnation of Jôyô. Today in the Tôrôdô is the *Shirakawa-tô* ("Shirakawa lamp"). Visitors are told that this lamp has been kept burning since first lit by the ex-emperor nine hundred years ago. It stands beside Jôyô's lamp.¹⁴

After the pilgrimages of Shirakawa and Toba visitors from all classes of society began to come to Kôyasan, many of them believing that one trip to the mountain guaranteed rebirth with Kôbô Daishi in Miroku's Tushita Heaven.¹⁵ It is often said that Kôyasan's true prosperity began with the visit of Shirakawa.

KÔYA-HIJIRI, THE RISE OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM, AND KAKUBAN (1073-1143)

In or around 1073, some twenty-five years after Jôyô's death, a sixty-nine-year-old monk named Kyôkai (1004?-1097) left the capital district and entered Kôyasan. Kyôkai was a *hijiri* (literally, "he who knows the sun"), a type of ordained but unaffiliated itinerant Buddhist holy man who traditionally specializes in asceticism, ritual healing, and retirement to the mountains. Other *hijiri* had come to Kôyasan previously, some a half-century earlier in Jôyô's time, so a number of them were on the

mountain when Kyôkai arrived. Kyôkai, however, seems to have been the first person to organize Kôyasan's *hijiri* into a community. By the time of his death in 1097 this community, later to be known as *Kôya-hijiri*, made up an important segment of Kôyasan's population.

The general practice of the Kôya-hijiri was to alternate periods of retreat at Kôyasan with long sojourns into the nation's villages and byways where they performed cures and narrated the legends of Kôyasan, most especially the legend of Kôbô Daishi's ongoing *samûdhi* in behalf of the nation. While in the villages the *hijiri* collected bones and other relics of deceased loved ones, and, in return for an appropriate offering, brought the relics back to Kôyasan for burial in the earth near Daishi's tomb. They also solicited donations toward the continuing restoration of the mountain.¹⁶

The Kôya-hijiri potentially were a very mixed blessing; however, for the brand of Buddhism that most of them practiced and preached owed relatively little to the intricate Shingon faith, but instead was a combination of Kôbô Daishi worship and Pure Land faith in the *nembutsu*. Pure Land belief required as its sole practice the recitation of the prayer *Namu Amida Butsu* ("I take refuge in Amida Buddha"), a response to Amida Buddha's vow to save all persons who placed their trust in him, regardless of their sinfulness, ignorance, poverty, or other unpromising circumstance. At death such a person's spirit would be escorted to Amida's western "Pure Land of Utmost Bliss" (*Gôkuraiku Jodo*), a paradise where eventual enlightenment was assured. According to Pure Land belief one no longer needed to live a life of asceticism or rigorous study to achieve deliverance. A simple trust in Amida's vow was sufficient. Against the charge that such a teaching was "too easy," Pure Land defenders argued that in the present degenerate age of Buddhism, known as *mappô*, anything more demanding was too difficult. For the great majority of sinners it was the *nembutsu* invocation or nothing.

As more and more residents of Kôyasan began chanting the *nembutsu* to the rhythm of fish-shaped wooden drums, the traditionalist Shingon priests and student monks became alarmed. Clearly, such a deliberate placing of Amida Buddha above Dainichi was heretical.¹⁷ While one might find some solace in the fact that the *hijiri* were a notoriously ragtag bunch, usually of common birth and with dubious religious training, the fact remained that the Pure Land enthusiasm now

extended far beyond the hijiri. It had become so fashionable among the nation's upper classes that some of Kôyasan's regular priests found themselves performing Amidaist funeral rites, such as the *Amida-goma*, simply to retain their aristocratic patrons. Perhaps what Kôyasan needed was a skilled syncretist who could reconcile the seemingly opposed faiths of Shingon and Pure Land. Enter Kakuban.

Kakuban (1095-1143) received his early priestly training at Shingon Nima-ji in the capital and at several temples in Nara, including Kôfuku-ji and Tôdai-ji. At age twenty he entered Kôyasan, ordered to go there by Kôbô Daishi himself, says one story, who in a dream instructed the talented young priest to revitalize the mountain and the Shingon religion. At Kôyasan Kakuban engaged in intense esoteric practice, especially the strenuous one-hundred-day *Kokuzô-gumonji-hô* used by Kôbô Daishi. That done, with the aid of ex-Emperor Toba (1103-1156) he established a new school at Kôyasan for the study of Shingon, and then, to accommodate the overflow of students, built Daidenpô-in (in 1132), where he reinstated the *denpô-e* training in the transmission of the Dharma, the program first established by Shinzen nearly three hundred years before. Also in 1132 Kakuban built Mitsugon-in (near the present Rengejô-in), a monastery for hijiri and the practice of the *nembutsu*. It was at Mitsugon-in that he took up residence.

What Kakuban then attempted to produce, both in theory and in practice, was a synthesis of Esoteric (Mikkyô) Buddhism and Pure Land (Jôdo) Buddhism. His argument, in simplified form, was that the speech component of Kôbô Daishi's "three-secre" speech-mind-body practice included the option of the *nembutsu* invocation. Thus, a person might embrace the Amida worship of popular Pure Land faith and still remain within the fold of traditional Shingon.¹⁸ Put another way, being reborn after death in Amida's Western Pure Land paradise was the salvational equivalent of becoming enlightened through Dainichi Budda in one's present life (*Kaikai's sokushin jôbutsu*). Esoterically, Dainichi Budda and Amida Buddha were the same.

From the start the conservative priests of Kongôbu-ji were dubious about Kakuban's clever marriage of Shingon and Pure Land. Even more, they resented Kakuban's increasing popularity and power; one manifestation of which was that Daidenpô-in and its affiliated temples now were receiving far larger endowments than Kongôbu-ji and its affiliated tem-

ples received. When in 1134 Ex-Emperor Toba chose to appoint Kakuban chief abbot of Kongôbu-ji in addition to Daidenpô-in, even the priests of Tô-ji in the capital took alarm, interpreting the appointment as a signal that Kôyasan was about to declare its independence of Tô-ji. (Tô-ji's chief priest had been serving as head of Kongôbu-ji since Kangen's time.) Both Tô-ji and Kongôbu-ji protested to Toba, but the ex-emperor held firm.

Kakuban, now recognizing that he faced a near-mutinous opposition, quickly surrendered the directorship of both Kongôbu-ji and Daidenpô-in and retired to Mitsugon-in for a thousand-day period of contrition and meditation.¹⁹ The emboldened opposition, however, was not content with this gesture. They still feared Kakuban's influence and desired to be rid of him altogether. As a show of strength they assembled a force of armed monks, called *sôhei*, from their outlying estates. In response, Kakuban's supporters formed their own armed militia. In 1140, in one of Kôyasan's darkest moments, the armed monks representing Kongôbu-ji attacked the temples loyal to Kakuban and set them ablaze. In all, more than eighty halls were destroyed. Kakuban, joined by around seven hundred followers, fled to the foot of the mountain, then proceeded westward along the Kinokawa River to the safety of a small branch temple in a village beneath Mt. Negoro.

At the Negoro temple (Jingû-ji) Kakuban continued to write, study, and teach, and to pray for an early return to Kôyasan. But Kôyasan did not recall him. After just three years of exile Kakuban died at Negoro, where he was buried. He was only forty-nine. He left behind a large and important body of writing, including *Amida Hishaku* (The Esoteric Explication of Amida), a succinct treatise on the nonduality of Amida and Dainichi.²⁰

Following Kakuban's death many of his followers returned to Daidenpô-in on Kôyasan, and for a time the hostility with Kongôbu-ji abated. But conflict broke out again in 1168, and once more in 1175. The imperial court attempted to remove those most responsible for the strife, but the difficulties continued. Finally, in 1288, nearly a century and a half after Kakuban's exile, Daidenpô-in's chief priest, Raiyu (1216-1304), left Kôyasan for Mt. Negoro, taking his disciples with him. At Mt. Negoro this group initiated a new branch of Shingon known as *Shingi* Shingon (New Doctrine Shingon), which soon became a vigorous

nationwide school in its own right. The Negoro-ji temple grew so rapidly that for a time it rivaled both Mt. Hiei and Kôyasan in size and power.²¹

Today at Kôyasan the old strife with Kakuban is largely forgotten, and Kakuban himself is ranked among the mountain's most brilliant figures. Under his brief leadership Kôyasan enlarged its material wealth and reestablished itself as a major center for Buddhist scholarship. He often is remembered as "the man who revived Shingon-shū."²²

KIYOMORI (1150-1186)

In the latter half of the twelfth century Japan suffered through a succession of bloody conflicts of imperial succession: the Hôgen War (1156), the Heiji War (1160), and the Gempei War (1180-1185). In the last of these wars the forces of the Minamoto clan triumphed conclusively over the previously dominant Taira clan, leaving a weakened and fearful imperial court little choice but to yield political and military rule to the Minamoto leader, Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199). Assigned the temporary rank of *shôgun*, Yoritomo made it clear he intended to remain *shôgun* for life and pass the title on to his heirs, which he did.

For his administrative headquarters Yoritomo chose not the imperial capital of Heian-kyô but his own primary military base, the small eastern city of Kamakura. Life now changed for much of the nation, including its temples. The self-indulgent Heian age (794-1185) was replaced by a disciplined, warrior-dominated "feudal" period later to be designated the Kamakura era (1185-1333).

While many of the nation's most powerful Buddhist temples had been drawn into the Minamoto-Taira conflict, often to their own destruction, Kôyasan remained aloof. The sympathy of most of its priests, however, was with the Taira, in large part because the chief of the Taira clan, the arrogant and brilliant Taira no Kiyomori (1118-1181), had been one of Kôyasan's major benefactors. In legend, if not in fact, it was a prophecy Kiyomori received at Kôbô Daishi's tomb that initiated his remarkable rise to power. This prophecy also led, indirectly at least, to his subsequent fall. Here is part of Kiyomori's story as seen from the perspective of Kôyasan. Some of it is historical.

In 1149, after Kôyasan's Dairô was burned in an electrical storm, Kiyomori, then a provincial governor, provided funds for its reconstruction. Seven years later, when the project was completed, Kiyomori climbed the mountain to be present for the dedication ceremony. After praying to the Great Sun Buddha he proceeded to Kôbô Daishi's mausoleum where he encountered an apparition of the saint in the form of an elderly priest. The apparition thanked Kiyomori for the repair of "our pagoda" and urged him to attend next to "our shrine" of Itsukushima in Japan's Inland Sea. The Itsukushima Shrine, the apparition explained, was another place where the Great Sun Buddha manifested himself. If you rebuild that ruined shrine you "shall rise to high office. None will be able to keep abreast of you in your rise to glory." With this promise the apparition vanished, leaving behind only the fragrance of incense.

In response Kiyomori rebuilt the magnificent (and now world-famous) "floating" Itsukushima Shrine on the island of Miyajima.²³ Later, while staying at the shrine, Kiyomori dreamed that a youth stepped forward from the shrine's holy door, handed him a short halberd, and spoke these words: "I am a messenger from the goddess of this shrine [Benzaiten]. Keep this blade. With it you will maintain peace in both heaven and earth and thus guard the imperial family." When Kiyomori awoke he found the physical halberd beside his pillow, a certain guarantee that he would rise to the premiership. The next day, however, the goddess herself appeared to Kiyomori to deliver a word of caution: "Do you remember the [favorable] words that I caused the sage of Mount Kôya to speak to you? But if your deeds are evil, your descendants will not know prosperity."²⁴

From the moment of the Itsukushima oracle Kiyomori enjoyed one triumph after another. He made Itsukushima his family shrine and prayed there to Benzaiten, asking that his daughter conceive a son whom he could declare emperor. This quickly came to pass. So godlike in power did Kiyomori become that some said he was an incarnation of the Buddha. In his success, however, he forgot Benzaiten's warning. His rule became steadily more tyrannical and cruel until even his most sympathetic advisers were appalled. Finally, in the second year of the Gempei War, Kiyomori contracted a fever of preternatural severity. Curative water was brought down from Mt. Hiei, but the sacred liquid burst into steam the

moment it touched his flesh. Nothing could be done to save him. Even in his suffering, however, Kiyomori thought only of vengeance against his enemies. "When I die," he instructed those at his bedside, "do not build a temple or pagoda. Do not perform any ceremonies for me. Instead you must send an army at once to vanquish Yoritomo; you must cut off his head and hang it before my tomb."²⁵ These were his last words.

In conformity with the goddess Benzaiten's warning, Kiyomori's evil deeds fell as curses on his progeny. On April 25, 1185, at the bay of Dan-no-ura in the Inland Sea, his cherished grandson, child emperor Antoku, just seven years old, was carried to the bottom of the ocean in the arms of his grandmother, Kiyomori's widow. Nearly all the lords and ladies who had placed their trust in Kiyomori drowned that day. The child emperor's mother, Kiyomori's daughter, pulled from the water against her will, subsequently lived out her life in rural isolation, her head shaved, dressed as a nun.

Kōyasan possesses a major relic of this history. In order to memorialize his early prophetic meeting with the ghost of Kōbō Daishi, Kiyomori had directed an artist to produce a large painting of Shingo's Dual Mandala for placement in the mountain's Golden Hall. As he was examining the newly completed work, Kiyomori impulsively drew a knife, cut into his neck, and repainted Dainichi's jeweled crown with his own blood. This famous "blood mandala," now somewhat deteriorated, survives as one of Kōyasan's treasures.

THE KAMAKURA ERA (1185-1333)

Throughout the Gempei War and during the conflicts that preceded it, Kōyasan held frequent memorial services to placate the spirits of the thousands who had suffered violent and often humiliating deaths. Such spirits especially needed to be mourned and pacified, for otherwise their torment might cause them to seek to injure the living. These ceremonies often were conducted on a grand scale, continuing for days without interruption.²⁶

Kōyasan also became a destination for many of the conflict's survivors. Veteran warriors from both sides climbed the mountain to do penance for their bloody acts, some staying on to become monks.

Bereaved servants brought their master's cremated remains for interment near Kōbō Daishi's tomb, then, with shaved heads, withdrew to temple cells to pray for the master's enlightenment in his next life. Ousted ministers and officials came to Kōyasan in voluntary exile, hoping to distance themselves from a deceiving and mutable world.

So the population of the mountain grew during this troubled period. Temple halls and residences, more than two thousand in number, extended all the way from the Great Gate at the western end of the valley to the Ichi-no-hashī bridge at the entrance to the forest cemetery. Financial support for the temple city came from a number of sources. Memorial services brought in a steady stream of fee offerings. Pilgrims and visitors left material gifts and monetary contributions. The hijiri continued their fund raising in the villages. By far the largest support, however, came from the scores of agricultural estates that had been bequeathed to the mountain by various emperors, nobles, aristocrats, and other landowners. These holdings were now quite extensive, with a particular concentration of estates in the valley of the Kinokawa and on into Nara province. With large land holdings came large difficulties, however. There was the problem of maintaining the loyalty of estate workers and stewards, especially when these people judged the mountain's imposed taxes to be oppressive.²⁷ Often estate boundary lines were in dispute, and even the validity of estate ownership sometimes would be challenged. Occasionally, neighboring landholders conducted encroachments or local chieftains seized estate revenues. In such circumstances Kōyasan could appeal for protection to the court in Heian-kyō or to the military government in Kamakura, but such appeals rarely brought satisfaction. Japan had become a decentralized feudal nation, and large monastery complexes such as Kōyasan, willingly or not, now functioned as feudal entities in competition with other feudal entities. To defend its interests Kōyasan was forced to establish its own trained militia.

Another problem, also in part a consequence of the mountain's continuing growth, was the increasing disharmony among its primary categories of residents. By the end of the twelfth century the conservative scholar-priests (known as *gakuryō*), who had been trained in traditional Shingon beliefs and practices and therefore saw themselves as the primary members of the community, were outnumbered by two other constituencies—the Pure Land hijiri, previously discussed, and the mountain's

custodial monks (or meditation practitioners), known as *gyōnin*. The conflict between the scholar-priests and the custodial monks was especially intractable.

Unlike the scholar-priests the *gyōnin* did not study the mandalas and sacred texts and conduct esoteric rituals. But they did perform a number of essential services. They prepared meals, maintained the halls, acquired supplies, collected taxes, trained the militia. They also carried out the more routine religious duties, such as placing offerings of incense, food, flowers, and votive lights before the deities. The *gyōnin* were the worker bees, and proudly so, with a full sense of having been called to service by Kōbō Daishi. All the same, their large numbers and growing independence produced an increasingly bitter conflict with the scholar-priests.

Meanwhile Kōyasan continued to attract some of the most prominent and innovative Buddhist leaders of the Kamakura era. Hōnen (posthumously Enkō Daishi, 1133–1212), founder of the Jōdo (“Pure Land”) sect, spent at least a brief time on the mountain. Shinran (1173–1263), founder of Jōdō Shinshū (“True Essence Pure Land Sect”) and the first prominent Buddhist priest openly to marry and raise a family, built a hut, called Amida-in, near Chū-in. Nichiren (1222–1282), founder of the Hokke sect (Nichiren-shū), made Kōyasan an important stop in his religious education.²⁸

A visitor who was especially important to the hijiri was Ippen (posthumously Enshō Daishi; 1239–1289), a mountain ascetic and founder of the Ji sect of Pure Land Buddhism. Ippen taught the hijiri the “dancing *nembutsu*,” a blend of singing, dancing, and bell ringing.²⁹ Chōgen (1121–1206), another visiting mystic and Pure Land devotee, reestablished the Shinbessho, a remote hermitage for hijiri in the southeast precinct of the valley.³⁰ Today this hermitage provides an important deep woods training retreat for Kōyasan’s student monks. A new leader of the Kōya-hijiri was Kakushin (1207–1298), who came to Kōyasan in 1225. A Pure Land advocate, Kakushin later traveled to China and returned a Zen master. Just before his death at age ninety Kakushin served as spiritual adviser to Kōyasan’s Karukaya Dōshin, the father of Ishidōmaru, whose story we already know. Myōe (1173–1232), a learned mountain mystic who sought to protect Kegon and Shingon from Pure Land dilution, was at Kōyasan for at least one summer. The Shingon poet-monk Saigyō (1118–1190), arguably the nation’s greatest composer

of Japanese *waka*, was a Kamakura-era resident, arriving around 1150 and remaining off and on for the better part of thirty years.

Pilgrimages by imperial figures continued. Ex-Emperor Go-Shirakawa, a central actor in the Gempei War, climbed Kōyasan in 1169. Ex-Emperor Gotoba came in 1207. Ex-Emperor Gosaga, in 1258. Ex-Emperor Gouda climbed the mountain in 1313, and in this instance “climbed” is the proper term. He appears to have been the first emperor or ex-emperor to have declined the use of a palanquin. The spiritual efficacy of ascending the 21.5 km (13.4 mile) pilgrimage trail from Jison-in was further emphasized with the installation, in 1285, of ten-foot-tall stone markers along the entire route. These granite posts, 180 in number, were dragged up the mountain and set in place at intervals of one *chō* (109 meters), replacing the wooden markers that had been used previously. On each post was chiseled both its number in the sequence and the Sanskrit *bijā* (seed-syllable) of one of the 180 divinities of the Taizō-kai mandala. By pausing for prayer at each marker the conscientious pilgrim was able to transform the ascent into a symbolic progress through the Womb Realm Mandala. The final marker, and climax of the journey, was the image of the Great Sun Buddha seated in the Dairō.

A second series of *chō*-spaced stone markers, this time thirty-seven in number, was installed along the path that led from the Dairō to Kōbō Daishi’s mausoleum in the Okunoin. The *bijā* of this second set represented the thirty-seven sacred persons of the Diamond Realm Mandala, with Kōbō Daishi himself serving as the Great Sun Buddha at the center. The entire ritualized path from Jison-in to the Dairō and the tomb became known popularly as the *Chō-ishi-michi*, or “Chō-stone-path.” This path continues to be maintained today with nearly all the markers in their original positions.

Also increasing in popularity during Kamakura era was the immensely demanding 1,400-kilometer, two-month-long, eighty-eight-temple pilgrimage that circles clockwise about Kōbō Daishi’s home island of Shikoku. Legend insists that Kōbō Daishi founded the Shikoku route himself in 815, the year of his forty-second birthday, as a device for warding off the ill fortune that threatens every male at that age.³¹ One elaboration of the story has Kōbō Daishi sanctifying each of the eighty-eight sites with sand taken from the eight stūpas built over the Buddha’s relics in India.³²

UNDER THE ASHIKAGA SHÔGUNATE (1336-1573)

In the late spring of 1281 all Japan was alarmed by news of a second Mongol military expedition to Kyūshū, this time with a much larger force than had been employed in the first failed invasion. The new armada was estimated at four thousand ships and 140,000 warriors. As on the first occasion the government admonished all the Buddhist clergy to pray for divine protection. As its contribution Kōyasan sent sixty priests and the Nami-kiri ("Wave-cutting") Fudō to the island of Shiganoshima off the port of Hakata in Kyūshū. With an altar placed facing the sea, the priests conducted a fire offering before the Nami-kiri Fudō, beseeching him to act against the approaching enemy. The result of their endeavors—or so the event was construed—was the fabled *kamikaze* ("Divine Wind") that scattered and destroyed Kublai Khan's fleet.³³

In 1313, with the government in Kamakura weakened politically and financially by the drawn-out Mongol threat, Emperor Go-Daigo (1288-1339) joined in a conspiracy against the shōgunate, hoping to restore the primacy of imperial rule. When this enterprise failed, Go-Daigo took refuge at Mt. Kasagi (near Nara City) and asked Kōyasan, along with other temples, to send temple warriors to fight at his side. Kōyasan, consistent with its policy of remaining aloof from such conflicts, ignored Go-Daigo's appeal. When Crown Prince Morinaga also pleaded for help for the imperial cause, Kōyasan again declined. However, when the crown prince was forced to seek refuge at Kōyasan the monks took him in and concealed him. Flagrantly ignoring Kōyasan's traditional status as a religious sanctuary, the warriors of the shōgunate abruptly entered the valley, established their headquarters in the Daitō, and conducted a temple by temple search for Morinaga. When after five or six days the search proved unproductive, they gave up and marched away. Tradition says the clever monks had hidden the crown prince in the ceiling of the Daitō directly over the heads of the searchers.

In 1333, with the Kamakura regime finally overthrown (it had lasted a century and a half), Emperor Go-Daigo regained power, but by 1336 he was forced to flee again, this time to Mt. Yoshino, a short distance up the Kinokawa from Kōyasan. At Yoshino Go-Daigo continued to proclaim himself Japan's legitimate ruler even though a new military dictatorship, the Ashikaga, had enthroned its own emperor at the palace in Kyōto.

Thus, for a time Japan had two emperors, a circumstance referred to as the period of the Northern and Southern Courts (1336-1392). During these years of almost perpetual strife, Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358), the new shōgun, together with his "northern" emperor, Kōgan-in, made a strenuous effort to win Kōyasan's support, largely through promoting financial protections favorable to the monastery—for example, by eliminating the illegal seizure of Kōyasan's rice shipments. Takauji himself climbed Kōyasan in 1344 to extend these guarantees personally.

Entering into such protective affiliations now became a way of life at Kōyasan, both for the monastery as a whole and for its individual temples.³⁴ Kōyasan's Seikei-in contracted with the Ōuchi clan and Henjōkō-in with the Nambu clan. Annyō-in (near today's Kōyasan University) contracted with the Ashikaga themselves. The usual pattern of agreement required a temple to perform year-round religious services on behalf of the clan members and to provide accommodations whenever clan members and their retainers visited the mountain. In return the clans supplied the temples with political and financial support. This arrangement, known as the monastery-hostel system, gradually came to include nearly all of Kōyasan's temples. Later it evolved into the *shukubō* system we find today.

Grand pilgrimages to the mountain continued under the Ashikaga, the most ostentatious one being conducted by Takauji's grandson, Shōgun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358-1408), the builder of Kyōto's Golden Pavilion. Yoshimitsu's arriving retinue is said to have extended all the way from the Daimon entrance gate down to the Kakawa temple at the foot of the mountain, a distance of some twenty kilometers. The monks set before the shōgun a display of the mountain's most sacred treasures while Shingon scholar Yūkai offered instruction on the significance of each item.³⁵ It was well to remind the shōgun of Kōyasan's unparalleled religious status.

In general, Kōyasan prospered during the first half of the Ashikaga rule, with a particular resurgence in the area of doctrinal study. Among the outstanding scholars of the time were Chōkaku (1340-1416) and the aforementioned Yūkai (1345-1416), both of whom attracted student monks of talent and dedication. Yūkai and his followers took an especially firm position against those whose practices contradicted the word and spirit of Kōbō Daishi's teaching. This meant campaigning against the

large numbers of Kôya-hijiri who had embraced Ippen's "dancing *nembutsu*," an opposition that resulted in nearly all the hijiri being forced off the mountain by 1413. The Kôya-hijiri did not disband altogether, however, but continued their activities in the scattered hamlets of the nation.

Another one of Yūkai's purification projects was getting rid of a marginal but persistent collection of radical esoteric teachings known as Tachikawa-ryū. Here Yūkai's goal was not mere exclusion but total eradication, for he judged Tachikawa-ryū to have turned core Shingon principles into invitations to sexual license. Kôbō Daishi's sublime doctrine of *sokushin jôbutsu* ("becoming a Buddha in one's present body"), for example, was being equated with the bliss of sexual ecstasy. Sexual intercourse was touted as a primary path toward enlightenment. Yūkai called for a complete ban on such propositions and had every discovered Tachikawa text seized and burned. The suppression of Tachikawa continued at Kôyasan and at other Shingon centers for several decades after Yūkai's death.³⁶

The authority of the self-indulgent Ashikaga rulers ended finally in a protracted and disastrous war of shōgunal succession known as the Ōnin War (1467-1477). Heian-kyō was left smoldering and looted. The great Zen temples of the capital, which had flowered under the early Ashikaga, were largely destroyed and their priests scattered. The Shingon temples of Daigo-ji, Ninnaji, and Daikoku-ji, home to major Shingon training institutions, were burned. A peasant's revolt destroyed much of Tō-ji. A few generations earlier such losses could have been repaired through the use of estate incomes, but now the temple estates were largely under the control of feudal *daimyō* who no longer responded to any central authority.

Even Kôyasan was threatened, despite its physical remoteness from the capital. At the height of the Ōnin War a pillaging army entered the mountain to seize needed food supplies from the kitchens and storehouses of the monasteries. After this event Kôyasan sent military forces down into the plains below the mountain to close off access routes and defend its agricultural estates. Clearly the monastery-hostel contracts with various daimyō no longer provided adequate protection. Kôyasan would have to protect itself. But as one of the warlords would later remark, "No matter how powerful you are, there is always someone more powerful."³⁷

Kôyasan also was burdened with the renewal of internal violence. During the early period of the Ashikaga the custodial monks, or *gyōnin*, established their own separate temple organization and procured an independent support system of income-producing estates, an arrangement that further aggravated their simmering rivalry with the scholar monks. The event that precipitated violence between the groups was the levying of a tax against the *gyōnin* to finance the reconstruction of the shrine at Amano. Instead of paying the tax the *gyōnin* gathered allies from nearby villages and attacked the scholar monks. The ensuing struggle, which lasted for four months, reportedly left three hundred dead on the side of the scholars and seven hundred dead on the side of the *gyōnin* and their allies. Eleven years later, in the summer of 1464, violence erupted again. An army recruited by the scholar monks, drawn from all four countries of Kii province, entered Kôyasan through the Daimon entrance and attacked the *gyōnin*. The halls of three *tani* were set ablaze. Eventually, an outside mediator arranged a temporary truce, but the bitterness between the scholars and the custodial monks remained.

And again there was the scourge of fire. The most extensive conflagration in Kôyasan's twelve-hundred-year history occurred in the winter of 1521. The outbreak began at Fukuchi-in. From there, fanned by mountain winds, flames swept from temple rooftop to temple rooftop, overwhelming the monks with their bucket brigades. By the time a quenching rain started falling more than 1,300 of Kôyasan's structures had been lost, including some of its most magnificent buildings. The Dairō, the physical and spiritual heart of the monastery, once again was reduced to rubble.

In response to this crisis the still despised but irrepressible hijiri, led by Ahon and Ajun of Ippen's Ji sect, began soliciting donations toward the reconstruction of the major buildings.³⁸

ODA NOBUNAGA: KÔYASAN UNDER SIEGE (1571-1582)

In the latter half of the sixteenth century the brutal and resourceful warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) launched a series of military campaigns designed to bring the anarchic nation under his sole military

control. Others had pursued this goal, but none with Nobunaga's boldness and perseverance. When by 1571 he had succeeded in subduing, or establishing alliances with, all but a few of his most powerful competitors, he turned upon an opponent his predecessors had been reluctant to attack, the formidable Buddhist monasteries. Nobunaga's first assault was against Saichō's Tendai temple city of Enryaku-ji on Mt. Hiei just north of the capital.

The attack was preceded with an offer. Mr. Hiei, which had open ties with Nobunaga's enemies, could declare itself Nobunaga's ally, in which case certain already confiscated temple holdings would be returned; or it could declare itself neutral, in which case Nobunaga would exact no punishment; or it could continue to oppose him, in which case Enryaku-ji would be destroyed. Enryaku-ji elected to treat this offer with contempt. After all, the monastery was a sovereign sacred community with no obligation to respond to the demands of a secular warlord. Further, it was still the official spiritual guardian of the capital, a function that should make it doubly immune to assault.

Nobunaga quickly ordered an army of thirty thousand men to take positions at the foot of Mt. Hiei's eastern slope. Now alarmed, the priests of Enryaku-ji sent him some gold and silver as a peace offering. But Nobunaga no longer was interested in negotiation. When several of his lieutenants expressed dismay at the prospect of attacking a holy mountain, Nobunaga reportedly defended his action as both expedient and morally necessary. "If I do not take them away now, this great trouble will be everlasting. Moreover, these priests violate their vows; they eat fish and stinking vegetables, keep concubines, and never unroll the sacred books. How can *they* be vigilant against evil, or maintain the right?"³⁹

At dawn on September 30, 1571, Nobunaga's forces began advancing up the mountain. Their orders were to plunder and burn every structure, including the most sacred sites. Additionally, every soldier-monk of Mt. Hiei, every priest, man, woman, and child was to be put to the sword. "Surround their dens and burn them, and suffer none within them to live!" Even the temple entry town of Sakamoto at the foot of the mountain was to be destroyed.

Nobunaga's army followed orders. Those inhabitants of Enryaku-ji who did not die in the flames of the temples were intercepted on the forest paths, hacked down, and beheaded. The few who escaped into

forest thickets and ravines were searched out and shot by marksmen with muskets. Reportedly, one group of captured women and children was beheaded on direct orders from Nobunaga.

For centuries the priests and soldier monks of Enryaku-ji had been able to intimidate emperors and sway policy in the capital. Now, in a couple of days, Nobunaga had brought to completion what no one before him had dared to attempt. The number of buildings destroyed on Mt. Hiei has been put at two to three thousand, the number of people slain, both priests and laity, at three to four thousand. Nobunaga lost fifty men, counting both dead and wounded. Enryaku-ji, "Temple of the Indestructible Light of the Dharma," the burial place of Saichō, was wiped out. The temple halls burned for four days.⁴⁰

Enryaku-ji's supporting estates were seized. To Akechi Mitsuhide, the general who had been of special assistance in the slaughter, Nobunaga granted the prizes of Sakamoto city and Mt. Hiei itself, a fief worth 100,000 *koku* of rice.

After dismissing the last of the Ashikaga shoguns, Nobunaga next placed under siege a Buddhist enemy that was even more formidable than Mt. Hiei, the immense moat-protected Hangan-ji temple-fortress of the Jōdo-shin-shū sect at Ishiyama (today's Ōsaka). Probably no other institution of the time, either political or religious, had such a broad and zealous base of power in so many provinces. Additionally, the Ishiyama fortress could be provisioned by boat from Ōsaka Bay. Unable to subdue the fortress directly, Nobunaga took on its allies in outlying areas, and with enough success to bring about a surrender settlement in 1580 after ten years of siege. Before surrendering, the defenders set the fortress afire, determined that Nobunaga, the "enemy of the Buddhist Law," would have no opportunity to desecrate its sacred halls.⁴¹ The Ishiyama site Nobunaga gave to another of his ace generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi later would build there the greatest of all Japan's fortresses, Ōsaka Castle.

With both the capital and the Naniwa (Ōsaka) area secured, Nobunaga now turned his attention southward to Kii province. Already he had defeated most of his enemies there, but Kōyasan and Negoro-ji, the two most powerful surviving Buddhist centers, remained intact. Both temples on occasion had been of military assistance to Nobunaga, but he feared their expansionist ambitions might make them future enemies. He

decided to dispose of Kōyasan first, for it had given him an excellent pretext for assault.

In March 1580 Kōyasan had provided sanctuary for five retainers of a former Nobunaga ally and now archenemy, Araki Murashige. In July 1580 Nobunaga had sent armed envoys to Kōyasan to request that the five be surrendered for execution. From Kōyasan's point of view this request would have been appropriate only if the retainers had been criminals, but they were not criminals. They were political enemies. Besides, the very presence of Nobunaga's armed envoys was offensive to Kōyasan, which claimed immunity from all external police jurisdiction. Kōyasan's monk militia bravely escorted Nobunaga's men off the mountain. Furious at the affront, Nobunaga sent a second group of thirty-two warrior envoys to enforce his demand. These men had been picked carefully from nearby Sakai and had a good knowledge of the layout of Kōyasan's temples. Thus, when their demand for the five retainers again was rejected, they began a temple by temple search, physically abusing those monks who protested or tried to resist. Kōyasan's response to this outrage (or so the story goes) was to ply Nobunaga's envoys with drink, then hack them all to death.

This violence was Nobunaga's pretext for an assault. Starting in early September 1581 he began sending military units southward into the valley of the Kinokawa. As the army advanced, meeting only token resistance, it burned Kōyasan-affiliated villages and took possession of estate rice fields. The rice, already approaching ripeness, would feed the army. After occupying the major citadels along the Kinokawa, Nobunaga's men took up positions at each of the trailheads that led to Kōyasan. Nobunaga's third son, Noburaka, was put in charge of assault preparations. At the age of twenty-two Noburaka was deemed ready for his hour of glory.

While the military buildup was taking place Nobunaga found another outlet for his fury at Kōyasan. He instructed his operatives to seize all the Kōya-hijiri they could find along the nation's rural pathways. These hijiri, lacking weapons and not knowing they were at risk, made for easy capture. When a sufficient number had been taken prisoner they were assembled at Heian-kyō, at Ise, and at Azuchi (the location of Nobunaga's primary castle), then executed. The number of Kōya-hijiri slain during this operation is placed at 1,383.⁴²

Meanwhile, Kōyasan was preparing its defenses. Apart from its own affiliated villages and estates, the only possible source of outside help was the powerful Shingi Shingon complex of Negoro-ji. But Negoro-ji rejected Kōyasan's appeal for help and instead sent units of their own militia to join Nobunaga's besieging army.

The core of Kōyasan's defensive force, its army of warrior-monks, numbered around three thousand. If we can believe the paintings of the time, each warrior-monk entered battle holding a curved sword in his right hand and a string of prayer beads in his left. Around his shaved head was wrapped a white scarf that concealed the mouth and nose. Worn beneath the religious robe was a suit of light armor. Some of these *sōhei* may have been trained in the use of the musket, although in this skill they would have been far behind Nobunaga's soldiers and the monks of Negoro-ji.

To Kōyasan's army of monk-warriors was added a much larger militia made up of landholders, farmers, and villagers from the nearby affiliated estates (in theory Kōyasan then controlled some 2,063 villages), men experienced in defending their rice fields and households against external intrusion. Many of these already would have pledged loyalty and subservience to Kōyasan.⁴³ The written records suggest a total of thirty-six thousand defenders.⁴⁴ This army was divided into ten units. Seven units were assigned the task of guarding each of the seven trails that led to the mountain, while three units were kept in reserve. At each of the entrances was displayed a silk banner with the characters *Kon-gō-bu-ji* and the image of a tiger with glowing eyes, symbol of a determined will to resist the enemy.

While these preparations were under way, the leadership of Kōyasan sent a message to Imperial Prince Shin'ō, abbot of Ninna-ji in Heian-kyō, requesting that the prince ask Emperor Ōgimachi to intercede. The emperor promptly sent a message to Nobunaga with the instruction that he end the military threat to Kōyasan. There is no evidence that Nobunaga paid the slightest heed.

In October 1581 the attack against the portals of Kōyasan began. We are told that the young men of Kōyasan who had remained at the summit now descended the mountain to risk their lives against the enemy. The older priests who were left behind bowed their heads in prayer before the flames of five goma altars.⁴⁵ During the three days the

attack lasted Kôyasan reportedly lost 1,300 men, but the assault did nothing to change the basic military situation.⁴⁶ We do not know what casualties the attackers may have suffered, but clearly Nobutaka now realized he faced a determined enemy.

Manifestly, Kôyasan was more easily defended than Mt. Hiei had been. Its remote summit valley was guarded on all sides by a succession of wooded ridges and winding, steep-sided ravines, terrain in which large numbers of men could maneuver only with difficulty. Pilgrim climbers enjoyed well-marked paths to the summit, but a hostile army strung out along the same trails would be subject to constant harassment and ambush. If the army opted to advance through untracked forest it would soon become disoriented and exhausted.

Kôyasan's defenders waited for a second assault, but nothing occurred beyond a few light skirmishes. As winter approached, and Nobutaka's army remained largely inactive, Kôyasan gradually realized it was less under attack than under siege. This new circumstance caused no increase in anxiety, for the mountain's storerooses had been fully stocked as one of the preparations for battle. Additionally, some of the provisioning villages, like Amano, were still within the defensive perimeter. The snows of winter fell and melted. Spring came. In April 1582 units of Nobutaka's army attacked in the area of Mount Jimori, but again there was no significant advance.⁴⁷

In the summer, with the desultory siege of Kôyasan continuing, Nobunaga's attention turned to the west, where a critical military engagement was in preparation. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, perhaps the ablest of Nobunaga's generals, was organizing an army to engage the forces of the powerful Mōri clan in Bitchū province. If Mōri could be defeated decisively, then the door would be opened to all of western Honshu, which in turn would give Nobunaga access to the four provinces of Shikoku and the nine provinces of Kyūshū.⁴⁸ Compared to the developing possibilities in the west, the affair of Kôyasan was insignificant.

To assure victory against Mōri, Nobunaga decided to send the armies of his allies Tokugawa Ieyasu and Akechi Mitsuhide westward to join Hideyoshi, with himself at their head. As a first preparatory step Nobunaga instructed Ieyasu, freshly returned from a victory elsewhere, to go to Sakai (immediately to the south of today's Ōsaka) and enjoy an interval of rest. Akechi Mitsuhide he instructed to go home to Tamba

province to remobilize his army. Meanwhile, Nobunaga himself would make his own preparations in the capital.

In Heian-kyō, as was his custom, Nobunaga took up temporary residence at Honnō-ji, a temple located near the imperial palace. Although technically a temple, Honnō-ji physically was a fortress, protected by high walls, a moat, and watchtowers. Usually, Nobunaga surrounded his places of residence with a retinue of at least two thousand armed men, but in the friendly environs of the capital a guard of two hundred seemed sufficient. On the twentieth day of June he hosted a large tea ceremony for some fifty nobles of the court. Meanwhile, his trusted lieutenant Akechi Mitsuhide, having assembled the Tamba army, was marching with his men to the outskirts of the capital.

Early in the morning following the day of the tea party a band of Akechi's men surrounded and attacked Honnō-ji. One report says that Nobunaga had just washed his hands and face and was drying himself with a towel when Akechi's soldiers burst in upon him and shot him in the side with an arrow. Apparently Nobunaga attempted to fight back, but after suffering a further wound retreated to an inner chamber. Some say he then cut his belly; others that he set fire to the temple. Perhaps he did both. In any event Nobunaga's body was "reduced to dust and ashes" in the temple flames.⁴⁹

Nobunaga's eldest son, Noburada (1557-1582), rushed with his guard to Honnō-ji, but arrived too late to assist his father. Noburada himself was then surrounded in nearby Nijō Castle, where, after resisting Akechi's soldiers for a time, he committed suicide along with ninety of his retainers. The capital secured, the traitorous Akechi now marched his army eastward to Nobunaga's castle at Azuchi, captured it, and began distributing Nobunaga's wealth to potential allies. Akechi then marched back to Heian-kyō to receive the congratulations of a thoroughly intimidated imperial court. His scheme to seize full power required just one more bold stroke. He dispatched a hard-riding emissary to negotiate with Mōri in the west.

This emissary, however, fell into Hideyoshi's hands. Upon learning of Akechi's treachery, Hideyoshi decided to risk a daring intervention. He quickly concluded a compromise peace with Mōri (while keeping Mōri ignorant of the fact that Nobunaga was dead) and rushed back toward the capital, gathering fresh troops as he went. Hideyoshi's improvised

army encountered Akechi's road-weary soldiers near Yamazaki, a short distance southwest of the capital. In a battle of less than two hours' duration Akechi's army was decimated. Akechi himself, fleeing for his life, headed toward Sakamoto castle at the foot of Mt. Hiei. He never arrived. Reportedly, he was overtaken in the countryside by some peasants who killed him to obtain his splendid armor. By one account, Akechi's head was severed, presented before Nobunaga's ashes in the ruins of Honnô-ji, then sewn back onto the torso. The reconstituted body was then hung on a cross and left to rot.

This whirlwind of change in the capital altered everything at Kôyasen. On receiving news of Nobunaga's assassination the besieging army immediately broke off their encirclement, split into small units, and hurried off to find a place in the confusion of new political alignments. With the portals to Kôyasen now open, grateful villagers began climbing the mountain in celebration. The monks who had been most active in the mountain's defense were advanced in rank. The villagers who had been the most loyal were freed from paying taxes, at least for the present.

Within a year Nobunaga's third son, Noburaka, the one who had directed the attack on Kôyasen, was dead, a suicide while seeking sanctuary in a Buddhist monastery. Noburaka's motto during the siege of Kôyasen had been *ikken hei tenka*, "Pacify the Realm with One Sword." Now that one sword was in the grip of Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

HIDEYOSHI AND KÔYASAN'S WOOD-EATING SAINT (1582-1603)

Upon learning of Nobunaga's assassination, Tokugawa Ieyasu also had planned to gather his army to attack Akechi. But he was able to do little more than assure his own safety when news arrived that Hideyoshi already had avenged Nobunaga's death and seized the political initiative. The future belonged to Hideyoshi. Within a year Hideyoshi would turn most of his potential rivals into allies and take control of a larger portion of the nation than Nobunaga had controlled. Within four more years he would subjugate the four provinces of Shikoku. Two years after that, in 1587, he would subdue Kyûshû.

Prior to tackling Shikoku, however, Hideyoshi first looked at the province of Kii, and saw there what Nobunaga had seen before him, the troubling spectacle of two great Buddhist enclaves—Kôyasen and Negoro-ji—each powerful enough to threaten one's southern flank and block access to both the lower Kii Peninsula and Shikoku's south coast. Hideyoshi determined to end this threat quickly. Since Negoro-ji had openly backed the ambitions of Ieyasu, Hideyoshi elected to deal with it first. In the third month of 1585 he attacked Negoro-ji with an army reported at forty thousand men. Two decades earlier Negoro-ji had been able to defeat the best army a shōgun could field, but now, without allies and its strength depleted, the temple fell quickly. Within a few hours some two thousand of its *sōhei* were slain and its great armory of modern weapons captured. Most of the 2,700 sub-temples, spread over several valleys and mountainsides, were set afire. Bewildered survivors scattered into the woods and across rice fields in search of hiding places. Those priests who were caught were executed. The leaders of the two main schools of Shingi Shingon, however, priests Sen'yo and Gen'yū, slipped through Hideyoshi's encirclement. A few days later, accompanied by a number of followers, the two made their way to the presumed safety of Kôyasen.

Hideyoshi next disposed of two relatively minor annoyances in the Kii area. A short distance to the west of Negoro-ji, at Saiga (today's Wakayama City), was a small but militant twenty-six-village enclave of Jōdo-shin-shū sectarians. This confederation had earlier been an important ally of Ōsaka's Hongan-ji fortress in its resistance to Nobunaga, and more recently had supported Tokugawa Ieyasu against Hideyoshi. Now, directly confronted by Hideyoshi's massive army, the Saiga surrendered. The second minor annoyance was a small Buddhist temple complex at Kumano in extreme southern Kii. Hopelessly overmarched, Kumano also capitulated (in the fourth month of 1585).

Hideyoshi now was ready for Kôyasen. His intent was to end Kôyasen's capacity for independent military operation, but to do so without exposing his men to the dangers of a mountain campaign. Therefore, in the seventh month of 1585 he sent Kôyasen a letter inviting the monastery to give serious consideration to three suggestions. First, Kôyasen should surrender all of its far-flung estates except for that small "ancient domain" identified in the earliest documents bearing Kōbō

Daishi's handprints.⁵⁰ To fail to do so, the letter stated, would be against the spirit of Kôbô Daishi and therefore inconsistent with Kôyasan's continuance. Second, the monks of Kôyasan should stop expending energy on military preparation, for them a treacherous and morally wicked enterprise, and return to the study of the Buddhist religion. Third, Kôyasan should no longer offer sanctuary to the enemies of the government, for this was contrary to the general interests of the Japanese people. Mr. Hiei and Negoro-ji had indulged in this practice, and for that reason had been destroyed.

There was no mistaking Hideyoshi's "invitation" as anything other than an ultimatum, but for Kôyasan to accept the three propositions would amount to total surrender. The first proposition promised financial ruin. The second, by ending the *sôhei* system, would expose Kôyasan and its estates to whatever predation came their way in a land still ruled by violence. The final demand, the most dishonorable of the three, would deny Kôyasan's centuries-old right to provide sanctuary. No doubt many of Kôyasan's priests insisted that Hideyoshi's three demands be rejected outright. The gods and the Buddhas had protected the mountain before; they would do so again. But a counsel of prudence prevailed. Three monks were chosen to go to Hideyoshi's temporary headquarters at Saiga to enter into negotiations.

Fortunately for Kôyasan, among the selected monks was a former soldier, and *gyônin*, named Ôgo. Ôgo already was known locally as Mokujiki Shônin, "the Wood-Eating Saint," a name assigned to him because he abstained from rice and all other grains, limiting his diet to fruit, berries, and nuts, all of which grew on vines and trees. For all his asceticism, however, Ôgo retained the rough, frank style of a warrior. This combination of self-discipline and blunt earnestness immediately became apparent to Hideyoshi, himself a farmer's son. The two men entered into a negotiation that was less a meeting of potential victor with potential vanquished than an exchange of mutual trust.

Hideyoshi agreed that his army would not occupy the mountain, and that not a single structure of Kôyasan would be destroyed. In return, Kôyasan agreed to surrender nearly two thousand estates, approximately ninety percent of its total holdings. These holdings had rendered in annual taxes the equivalent of 173,137 *koku* of hulled rice (approximately 865,000 bushels) at a time when 10,000 *koku* was sufficient to

give a feudal lord *daimyô* status. (One *koku* equaled approximately the amount of rice required to sustain one man for a year.) Kôyasan's retained estates would yield but 21,000 *koku*. But as Ôgo had anticipated, a part of what Hideyoshi took away he soon began to give back in piecemeal fashion. As a memorial for his mother, Hideyoshi granted 10,000 *koku* and 1,000 pieces of gold for the reconstruction of the Kondô. Ôgo himself was placed in charge of this project. Other grants followed, including one for the building of massive Seigan-ji, another memorial to Hideyoshi's mother.⁵¹ Seigan-ji later became a part of the modern Kôgôbu-ji headquarters temple.

Kôyasan's weapons were to be surrendered. Every sword, long or short, no matter how prized, every dagger, every bow, every spear, every musket with its balls and powder was to be brought forward to be destroyed or given over to Hideyoshi's men. This surrender of weapons proved to be but the initial step in a profounder change; for soon all the temples of the nation were disarmed. Additionally, in 1588, Hideyoshi decreed that Japan's farmers must surrender their weapons. No Japanese leader had attempted such a policy before, yet compliance was remarkably thorough, and without the need of a dragnet. Japan's history of armed temples and an armed peasantry was ended.⁵²

The third of Kôyasan's concessions to Hideyoshi concerned the monks from Negoro-ji who were then enjoying Kôyasan's protection. Kôyasan conceded that these monks were indeed criminals and therefore must be expelled. Yet, as Ôgo had anticipated, the monks came to no harm. Within two years Sen'yo was given the temple of Hase-dera (in Nara prefecture), which he made the headquarters of Shingi Shingon's Buzan school. In 1600, after Hideyoshi's death, Gen'yû founded the Chishaku-in temple near the site of Hideyoshi's mausoleum in the capital, and there established Shingi Shingon's Chizan school. Hundreds of other men who had found refuge at Kôyasan, but toward whom Hideyoshi felt no animosity, were permitted to remain on the mountain. In fact, in subsequent years Hideyoshi spared the lives of many of his defeated enemies on the one condition that they shave their heads and go into exile on Kôyasan. Thus, Kôyasan escaped with a clear conscience on the most sensitive of the three concessions.

But the mountain was now a profoundly changed institution. No longer did it have its own vast estates, its own army, its own territorial

jurisdiction. It existed at the mercy of an autocrat whose power stopped only where he chose to have it stop. Hideyoshi no doubt was right, however, in arguing that the old Kôyasan had accommodated itself too much to the world. Ownership of a large number of estates had given birth to many ill, among them the need to recruit bands of roughneck warrior-monks for their protection.⁵³

On March 3 of the lunar calendar, 1594, nearly a decade after his negotiations with Ôgo, Hideyoshi climbed the sacred mountain with a large entourage of feudal lords, among them Tokugawa Iyasu. The once lowly farmer's son now signed his name *Tenka*, "The Realm." All the nation, he wrote, "excepting no foot or inch of land, has entered my grasp." The strongest of the *daimyô* were now his minions: the Môri, the Maeda, the Tokugawa, the Uesugi, even the Date in the far north. He also had become a great builder of monuments, halls, and castles. He had required sixty-two thousand laborers for the erection of a new Great Buddha in Kyôto, deliberately made two meters taller than Tôdai-ji's Great Buddha and housed in a hall one-third higher than Tôdai-ji's Daibutsuden. He had employed even larger labor battalions for the construction of his personal palace at Fushimi and for massive Ôsaka Castle with bartlements thirteen kilometers in circumference. Additionally, Hideyoshi was now the nation's premier patron of the arts, with especial attention to tea and Nô.

As for further military ventures, he recently had begun a campaign to conquer Korea. He imagined that China would follow, as easily reached as "pointing to the palm of my hand." When the mood was on him even far India seemed within his grasp.⁵⁴

It was early spring at Kôyasan. Each day of Hideyoshi's visit had its elaborate ceremonial. He attended a memorial service at Seigan-ji, built in honor of his mother. On another day he visited Daishi's tomb. On the sixth day he had a new Nô play performed, one composed especially for the occasion by his personal chronicler, scholar-poet Ômura Yûko. Ômurâ's drama, subsequently known as *Kôya-môde*, began with an account of how Hideyoshi and his party had stopped first at Yoshino to view the cherry blossoms, then proceeded on to Kôyasan so that Hideyoshi might make solemn offerings to the departed spirit of his mother. The *shite* of the first part of the play was an elderly nun who reappears in the second part transformed into the beautiful Bodhisattva

of music and dance. This transformed nun was Hideyoshi's mother, her religious elevation a consequence of her son's filial piety.⁵⁵

In the months following Hideyoshi's visit two curious stories spread about his experience there. One story has the gods taking such offense at the self-flattery of the Nô play that they strike the stage with a bolt of lightning. Hideyoshi, startled by the reprimand, immediately stops the drama, packs up, and leaves the mountain. The other story describes Hideyoshi at the Tamagawa the night before he was scheduled to visit Kôbô Daishi's tomb. He is seeking reassurance, for someone has told him that no person with an unclean soul would be permitted to cross over the sacred stream. We can imagine the eerie scene: Two hooded figures arrive at the dark bridge. The one in the lead stops, bows in the direction of the tomb, then steps onto the first plank of the bridge. This is Abbot Ôgo. Ôgo raises his lantern, gesturing for Hideyoshi to follow. But the great warrior is unable to proceed. The sound of black water throbs in his ears. He hears the cries of the dying. He is about to turn back when he sees a ghostly companion standing at Ôgo's side. The apparition mildly gestures for Hideyoshi to come forward. The Master will receive him, no matter how drenched in blood he may be. The next morning a fully confident Hideyoshi leads a sun-splashed procession to Kôbô Daishi's mausoleum.

In any event, it is clear that Hideyoshi's 1594 visit to Kôyasan further stimulated his interest in rebuilding the halls of the mountain. In all, he was to order the reconstruction of some twenty-five buildings, among them the Daitô, for which the Kôya-hijiri also had been collecting funds. He became such a generous patron that to the present day Kongbû-ji uses his crest as its own insignia.

But there was one dark episode, an event that many of Kôyasan's priests still think of when they think of Hideyoshi. Some years before his visit to the mountain, while preparing for the conquest of Korea, Hideyoshi had bestowed his own title of *Kompaku*, or regent, upon his nephew and adopted son, Hidetsugu. He then asked Hidetsugu to lead the Korean expedition. Although a seasoned warrior, Hidetsugu considered the venture too dangerous and declined to go. Angered and suspicious, Hideyoshi quickly found other faults in his heir, the most curious one being that Hidetsugu once had taken his wife and daughters onto the monastery grounds at Mt. Hiei (also now partly restored with Hideyoshi's help) in clear violation of the *nyônin kinzei* prohibition.

Hideyoshi also gave credence to stories that Hidetsugu suffered from bouts of irrational violence that made him unfit for high office. When, in 1693, one of Hideyoshi's wives bore him a son, thus providing him with a natural heir, he decided to remove Hidetsugu as his successor. To achieve this goal he first openly accused Hidetsugu of treason, then ordered him to go into seclusion at Kôyasan. Obedient to the order, Hidetsugu took up residence in Seigan-ji, the temple Hideyoshi had built in honor of his mother and where Ôgo was abbot. Hidetsugu had his head shaved and placed himself under Kôyasan's protection.

But Hidetsugu's exile did not assuage Hideyoshi's fears. As long as Hidetsugu remained alive he continued to be the legal regent of the nation, with his own son enjoying precedence over Hideyoshi's son in the future succession.

In the eighth month of 1595 three of Hideyoshi's generals, each with a thousand soldiers, entered Kôyasan and surrounded Seigan-ji. They then gave Hidetsugu Hideyoshi's instruction that he commit suicide. Hidetsugu protested that he was innocent of the charges of disloyalty. Priest Ôgo attempted to intercede for Hidetsugu, but the envoys would not negotiate. Left with no option, Hidetsugu performed ceremonial *seppuku*: he sat firmly upright, parted his kimono, grasped the knife with his right hand, plunged it into the left side of his abdomen and drew it across. A young page then performed the friendly office of beheading his dying lord. Hideyoshi's emissaries ended the ceremony by beheading the page. All this took place in one of Seigan-ji's most beautiful chambers, the one with Kano Tansai's murals of the willow tree in four seasons.⁵⁶ (The room is an obligatory stop for today's visitors.)

Shortly after Hidetsugu's death, Hideyoshi had Hidetsugu's three children executed as their mothers watched. Then the mothers and their ladies in waiting, thirty-one women in all, were decapitated. The bodies of the dead were thrown into a hole, covered over, and a stone marker erected with this brief inscription: "The Mound of Beasts." Placed deepest in the hole was the body of Hidetsugu's son.⁵⁷

In the following year, 1596, Hideyoshi had his own natural son, a child of three, declared regent. Two years after that a dying Hideyoshi summoned to his sickroom Tokugawa Ieyasu, then the nation's most ambitious and powerful feudal baron. He told Ieyasu he feared that after his death the nation once again would be rent by war. Only Ieyasu was

strong enough to prevent that. "I therefore bequeath the whole country to you, and trust that you will expend all your strength in governing it. My son Hideyori is still young. I beg that you will look after him. When he is grown up, I will leave it to you to decide whether he shall be my successor or not."⁵⁸

Ieyasu declined to accept what was in effect an obligation to keep Hideyoshi's heir in office, and when Hideyoshi died the predicted war for national dominance took place. On October 21, 1600, Ieyasu's most implacable foe, Ishida Mitsunari, together with powerful allies, sent a "western" army of Toyotomi loyalists against Ieyasu's "eastern" army in what was perhaps the single most significant civil battle in Japan's history. The encounter, with 130,000 western soldiers engaging eighty thousand eastern soldiers, took place at the mountain interval of Sekigahara, some one hundred kilometers northeast of Kyôto (along today's Shinkansen line). Ieyasu's eastern army was a decisive victor. The western army left an estimated thirty thousand dead heaped on the field of battle. Ishida was executed and decapitated in the capital.

In 1603, the victorious Ieyasu had himself appointed shôgun by the emperor, but for a time left open what was to happen to Hideyoshi's son, about whom a large and loyal support continued to gather. That question Ieyasu answered finally in 1615 when, after a massive siege, he destroyed Hideyori's headquarters at Ôsaka castle. As the inner defenses of the fortress were collapsing, Hideyori's young wife, Senhime, who happened to be Ieyasu's own granddaughter, sent a message to her grandfather asking that Hideyori be spared. When no reply came back Hideyori committed suicide. The next year Hideyori's two children, a boy of seven and a girl of five, were beheaded in the capital. Thus fell the last members of the short-lived house of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. While alive, Hideyoshi had gone to extravagant lengths to have himself declared a god, but in death the elevation did not hold.⁵⁹ Tokugawa Ieyasu was the new hero of heroes. The Tokugawa shôgunate, begun by Ieyasu and sustained by his heirs, would impose peace on Japan for the next two hundred and fifty years.

Although a disarmed Kôyasan did not have a military role to play during the period from Sekigahara to the fall of Ôsaka castle, the monks there had a clear bias toward the pro-Toyotomi forces. Hideyoshi had been a great patron. Additional patronage had come from a number of

the warlords in the Toyotomi coalition. A few years earlier, Ishida Mirsunari (1560–1600), the leader of the defeated western army at Sekigahara, had been persuaded by priest Ōgo to build a repository for Buddhist scriptures near Kōbō Daishi's tomb. After the fashion of Hideyoshi's gift of Seigan-ji, this repository was offered in honor of Ishida's mother. The repository stands in place today, although its library of 6,557 scrolls are kept in the Reihōkan museum.

Because he had allied himself with the defeated western leaders, Ōgo chose to resign as abbot and leave Kōyasan altogether after Sekigahara. His successor, Seiyō, made a trip to Ieyasu's victorious headquarters to solicit Ieyasu's recognition of his new position. Through such deferential behavior Kōyasan escaped Ieyasu's wrath, at least for the moment. Ōgo died in self-imposed exile in the fall of 1607, after which his remains were returned to Kōyasan and enshrined not far from the bridge to Kōbō Daishi's tomb. Ōgo is remembered by the monks of Kōyasan as the man whose courage and acumen permitted Kōyasan to survive and even rebuild during a period of extreme danger. Ōgo's official posthumous name is Kōzan Shōnin, but the name that has remained the most popular is "Wood-Eating Saint of Kōyasan."⁶⁰

UNDER THE TOKUGAWA (1603–1867)

Out of the rigorous national pacification achieved by the Tokugawa shōgunate came at least one important benefit to Kōyasan, an end to the threatened seizure of estates and estate income by uncontrolled warlords and officials. So what little was left of Kōyasan's manorial empire could be enjoyed in relative security. On the negative side was Kōyasan's absorption into the administrative structure by which the Tokugawa controlled the nation. In 1609 the new government officially declared the two primary abbots of Kōyasan to be *daimyō*, or feudal lords, each with a rank consistent with an allotment of three thousand priests and 100,000 *koku* of income. Each abbot in turn was required to make an annual trip to the new shōgunal capital of Edo (today's Tōkyō) to report to the government and perform obligatory rituals of allegiance. After each had reported on the affairs of his own assembly of monasteries, the Edo bureaucracy would pass back directives. From the perspective of Edo,

Kōyasan was just another feudal principality under obligation of obedient loyalty down to the smallest detail. Such matters as the format for initiation ceremonies, the content of school curriculums, the design and wearing of priestly dress, the criteria for advancement in rank—all these were defined and regulated by the government for purposes of bureaucratic control.

Not surprisingly, such an arrangement proved antithetical to real spiritual growth. Superficially the monks of Kōyasan enjoyed something of a renaissance in Buddhist scholarship during the early Edo years, but the primary motive for this labor was Edo's declaration that henceforth scholarship would be the primary basis for ecclesiastical advancement.⁶¹ Few priests bothered any longer to devote their energies toward sectarian innovation or leadership. Kōyasan became passively monastic.⁶²

Another subtly destructive aspect of Tokugawa leadership was the requirement that every inhabitant of the nation become a temple parishioner, at least nominally. On days specially chosen for the purpose each citizen reported to his or her local Buddhist temple where such information as date of birth, occupation, marital status, and history of travel was recorded. Not to have oneself churched in this fashion constituted a civil misdemeanor. In the eyes of the public, and increasingly in the eyes of the clergy as well, the temples became bureaucratic instruments of social control. Priests became government clerks.

Under the Tokugawa administration all communication with the Asian continent, once the energizing lifeblood of Japanese Buddhism, was closed off. The construction of ships capable of long voyages was forbidden. Any unlucky foreigner (Asian, American, or European) who came ashore in Japan, whether deliberately or by accident, faced execution. Correspondingly, any Japanese who sought to return from foreign parts risked a similar fate. Even as European powers began jostling for control of the western Pacific and much of continental Asia, the Tokugawa kept Japan sealed off and aloof.

In this sternly isolated and pacified land the mystique of Kōyasan and Kōbō Daishi remained intact. When several members of the Tokugawa family renewed the old practice of establishing reciprocal relationships with particular Kōyasan temples, other provincial lords followed suit. Bone relics of the nation's most important dead continued to be carried to the mountain to be placed in granite monuments (usually

five-part, pagoda-like structures called *gorintō*) built along the path to Daishi's mausoleum. Many of these monuments were constructed on a massive scale. One built by Tadanaga, son of the second Tokugawa shōgun, for his mother, took three years to complete. As before, hair and bone relics of emperors and empresses were placed in a specially designated area near Daishi's tomb. Over these imperial relics were built not the five-part *gorintō* favored by the daimyō, but rounded mounds of earth and stone after the fashion of the most ancient Buddhist practice. The trails to Kōyasan became crowded again. Edo considered pilgrimage journeys to be a safe outlet for the pent-up energies of its subjects.

Internally, Kōyasan was still tormented by the old conflict between the interests of its scholar monks and its custodial monks. In 1639, in an attempt to raise their religious status within the community, the gyōnin petitioned the abbots of the scholar monks to administer to them the *abhisheka* initiation rite. This request was refused, perhaps with some discourtesy. In retaliation 2,500 of the gyōnin cut off all communication with the scholars. A few years later, in 1643, when the rebuilt Daitō was being dedicated (it had burned yet again in 1630), a group of gyōnin insisted that they be permitted to place a tablet on the central pillar, just as the scholar monks were permitted to do. The scholars rejected the proposal. The two groups now began to appeal to the government in Edo, asking that a judgment be handed down on disputed matters. Finally in 1692, after fifty years of listening to the bickering, Edo sent a commission to Kōyasan to examine the situation firsthand. The result was radical surgery. Of the approximately 1,865 residence halls then at Kōyasan, a full 1,182 housed gyōnin. At the direction of the government all but 280 of these halls were ordered abandoned. Hundreds of gyōnin were expelled from Kōyasan. The surviving Kōya-hijin also suffered from the surgery, with scores excluded.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a period of economic strain and growing external threat from the Western nations, many of the old anti-Buddhist positions took on new credibility, especially among Japan's intellectuals. Prominent among the anti-Buddhist arguments was the assertion that the threat of Western hegemony resulted directly from Japan's having adopted a decadent alien religion (Buddhism) that obscured its own indigenous spiritual roots ("Shintō"). A new term, *kokuzai* ("national essence"), became shorthand for what was

now envisioned as the one most important characteristic of the nation, that its imperial rulers were "holy descendants of the gods." According to the logic of *kokuzai*, filial piety toward the emperor necessarily transcended all other possible relationships or duties. Only through this national fidelity could Japan recover its true nature as the "Land of the Gods," a corollary of which was that it would then again become "the chief country of the earth, providing law and order for all lands."⁶³ To achieve such a goal the emperor must have returned to him all those powers that had been usurped by the shōgunate. Additionally, every accretion of foreign religion that had reduced the native gods to subordinate positions must be removed. This radical nationalist argument ended with the demand that the political rule of the Tokugawa and the religious primacy of Buddhism must end.

As they watched the dramatic developments that eventually led to the return of imperial power in the Meiji Restoration the monks of Kōyasan generally felt more sympathy for the emperor's party than for the collapsing Edo shōgunate. In the last weeks of 1867, as the struggle entered its final crisis, a high-ranking servant of the emperor, Chamberlain Washio, came to Kōyasan to ask that it provide sanctuary for the young emperor, then but sixteen years old, should the anticipated revolution fail. As things turned out, no sanctuary was needed. Washio and his royalist force had no more than set up camp at the foot of Kōyasan in the village of Kamuro when a messenger from Kyōto arrived with the news that complete victory had been achieved and the shōgunate abolished.⁶⁴ On January 1, 1868, the new era received its official title, *Meiji* ("enlightened government"). A short time afterward some thirteen hundred monks from Kōyasan joined Prince Komatsu Akihito, himself a former Shingon monk, on a journey to Edo, now renamed Tōkyō ("Capital of the East"), to express their support of the restored emperor.

MEIJI PERSECUTION AND THE BUDDHIST REVIVAL

(1867 TO THE PRESENT)

Once the Meiji government was firmly established in Tōkyō the pro-Shintō reformers began to impose their will. In those parts of the nation where anti-Buddhist sentiment was most concentrated the activist

slogan *haibutsu kishaku* ("abolish the Buddha, destroy Shākyamuni") was given virulent application. In Mito and Satsuma hundreds of Buddhist temples were burned or transformed into government offices or private residences. Nativists hauled sacred texts out of sanctuaries and set them ablaze in the temple yards. Altar implements were melted down for their metallic value. Wooden statues of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were decapitated, then burned. Some energetic reformers reportedly pounded stone statues into rubble, then incorporated the debris into the walls of privies.

While a part of this activity may have been the work of overheated mobs, most of it seems to have been performed in a spirit of conscientious patriotic duty. "We students would go through town every day smashing every roadside Jizō or other Buddhist statue we could find," recalled one Nativist. "If even one [statue] were missed, it was a great disgrace to us."⁶⁵ Hundreds of Buddhist priests, their temples desecrated, were forced to reenter secular life. In response to anyone who protested these predations, the new Ministry of the People (*Mimbushō*) assigned guilt to the priests themselves.

[Buddhist] priests who have long been bastions of decadence, ignorant of the changing times, saturated in passions of the flesh, and confused as to which road to walk, priests who have lost all semblance of a true vocation . . . are themselves responsible for the destruction of Buddhism.⁶⁶

The priests of Kōyasan, surrounded by sympathetic communities, had little to fear from firebrands and looters, but they too suffered. Almost at once the new imperial government acted to deprive Buddhist temples of their few remaining income-producing estates. At Kōyasan this meant the loss of all but a forest fringe of some three thousand hectares (about 7,410 acres). Additionally, the nation's nobles were instructed to discontinue their sponsorship of Buddhist temples, a change that especially affected Kōyasan. The centuries-old tie between Shingon and the imperial family was cast aside. Sennyū-ji, a Shingon temple in the hills west of Tō-ji, ceased serving as the imperial family's official patron temple.⁶⁷ Royal family members no longer could become priests or nuns, and those who already had received holy orders were

instructed to abandon their calling. The seven-day New Year Shingon *nishubō* ceremony at the imperial palace—a rite designed by Kōbō Daishi specifically to protect the imperial office and the nation—was disallowed after a thousand years of observance.⁶⁸

Henceforward, all national religious ceremonies were to be conducted in accordance with the "native" religion. Three Shintō shrines were constructed at the Tōkyō palace so that the emperor could personally lead the nation in its proper devotions. In 1869, the year after the Restoration, the emperor made a ceremonial visit to the Grand Shrine at Ise, home shrine of his sun-goddess ancestor, Amaterasu. For twelve centuries no reigning emperor had thought it appropriate or necessary to make such a visit.

Changes also began to be introduced in the highly sensitive area of funeral and memorial services. In 1866 Emperor Kōmei, the Meiji Emperor's father, had been buried at Shingon's Sennyū-ji with largely Buddhist funeral rites, but only a few years later the dead emperor's memorial ceremonies were exclusively Shintō.⁶⁹ Such Shintō intrusions were highly threatening to a Buddhist institution that previously had enjoyed nearly exclusive jurisdiction over services for the dead.

Another important Meiji religious reform was the removal of all discernible Buddhist elements from the nation's mixed "shrine-temples." At the prestigious Miwa Shrine in Nara Prefecture, for example, where a close affiliation with Shingon institutions and Shingon doctrine had existed for centuries, all Buddhist trappings were stripped away, along with eighteen hereditary positions traditionally filled by Shingon priests. The Miwa Shrine's reward for this "purification" was redesignation as an imperial shrine with a rank second only to the Ise Grand Shrines themselves.⁷⁰

Like most Buddhist temples, both great and small, Kōyasan too was something of a "mixed" institution, a condition the government no longer would tolerate. All of Kōyasan's native gods were removed from their shrines, "liberated" from captivity as objects of Buddhist veneration. This meant that the two primary native protector gods, goddess Niunmyōjin and hunter-god Kariba-myōjin, were taken out of the Myōjin-sha in the Garan. The shrine's large Shintō gate was dismantled.⁷¹

Meanwhile, all Japanese citizens were instructed to re-register, this time at their local Shintō shrine instead of at their parish temple. Under

Daikyō, the new "Great Doctrine," religion and the state were to be regarded as one, bound together by a universal recognition of the emperor as ruler, supreme high Shintō priest, and beloved parent of all. Alien Buddhism had no place in this scheme. Travelers to Kōyasan told of Buddhist priests in the large cities being sent into the streets to beg for something to eat.

Faith in Buddhism, already largely eradicated in India and surviving only marginally in China, now seemed about to end in Japan. Or so many thought.

But the anti-Buddhist movement, after reaching its greatest intensity in the early 1870s, began to run into a fundamental resistance: the mass of Japanese citizens were showing little interest in altering their traditional religious loyalties. Why should they despise the kindly Jizō figure at the village crossroad simply because some politician or university scholar said it had a foreign origin? Motherly Kannon, merciful Amida Buddha, fiery Fūdō Myō-ō—these spiritual entities were enshrined in the heart. Perhaps more to the point, ordinary Japanese citizens made no distinction between Buddhist practices and Shintō practices. The religion they had embraced happily and innocently all their lives was an indiscreet mix.⁷²

Gradually, the chief Meiji leaders, many of whom from the beginning had regarded religious reform as only a secondary goal, concluded that the radical anti-Buddhist offensive was only weakening their cause, dividing the nation at a time when unity was essential. The primary enemy was not Buddhism, but the military, economic, and cultural pressure being exerted by the Western powers. To meet this external threat Japan needed to transform itself into a modern power, and as quickly as possible. That meant placating the West while vital elements of Western technology were imported and copied. As a part of its modernization program the Meiji government (in 1873) lifted its long-standing ban on Christianity, declaring that Japanese citizens henceforth would enjoy free personal choice in the area of religion, just as was the case in most Western countries. The policy of advancing "pure" Shintō as a national faith was not abandoned, however. Instead, in 1882, something called *Kōkka Shintō*, or "State Shintō," was established, and defined as a "social institution" rather than as a religion.⁷³ Each citizen now was expected to embrace *Kōkka Shintō* in demonstration of having accepted an assigned

place in the imperial system. By 1899, when the constitution reaffirmed this technical religious freedom, obligatory State Shintō already was functioning as an effective tool of public education and social indoctrination. For the next four decades it would be employed to promote both ultranationalism and militarism.

Japanese Buddhism, now given an opportunity to revive itself, declared that it too could be of service to a nation in crisis.⁷⁴ As an act of practical patriotism, and in response to the government's call for universal literacy, many priests began offering themselves and their temple halls for the training of the young. Something called *Shin Bukkyō*, or "New Buddhism," started to emerge, a Buddhism that sought to display greater intellectual vigor and social responsibility. In the social area, Shin Bukkyō emphasized the training of physicians and nurses and the building of hospitals, schools for the blind, and institutions for the aged. In the political area, it addressed such topics as capital punishment and abortion.

As part of this intellectual offensive the New Buddhism began pointing out to the nation, and to the West, that Buddhist thought was manifestly more "scientific" than Christian thought, especially in the fields of psychology, historiography, and evolutionary theory.⁷⁵ Spokesmen for Japanese Buddhism began to enter into international religious debates, most visibly at the "World's Parliament of Religions" held in 1893 at the Columbian World's Exposition in Chicago. Among the five attending Japanese representatives was a Shingon Buddhist priest, Toki Hōryū (later to become chief abbot of Kōyasan), who explained to a largely Western audience that historical Buddhism was an evolving revelation that had come to greater and greater fullness as its followers gained in spiritual capacity. Western notions that Buddhism was characterized by idol worship, passivity, and selfishness, Toki said, were based on a failure to understand how Mahāyāna (J. *Daizō*), or the Greater Vehicle of Northern Buddhism, had superseded the relativism of Hinayāna (J. *Shōjō*), the Lesser Vehicle of Southern Buddhism. Toki proposed that Christianity and Mahāyāna in fact had much in common, that Christianity's concepts of the Holy Spirit and the Logos were akin to his own sect's concept of *shingon*, or "True Word." Similarly, the Mahāyāna ideal of the Bodhisattva, with its emphasis upon postponing one's own deliverance for the sake of promoting the salvation of others, demonstrated that Buddhism was, like Christianity, a religion of self-sacrifice and universal love.⁷⁶

In a few areas Kôyasan no doubt benefitted from Meiji reforms. One government intervention put a final end to Kôyasan's centuries-old internal conflict among scholar monks, custodial monks, and hijiri. The solution simply was to abolish the divisions. Henceforward everyone living on the mountain was to be identified either as a member of a religious order or as a lay person. In consequence, in 1869 the former headquarters temple of the custodial monks, Seigan-ji, was combined with the former headquarters temple of the scholar monks, Kôzan-ji, to form a single comprehensive headquarters temple. This unified temple (both parts of which had been built by Hideyoshi) was named Kongôbu-ji, the name that previously had been used to describe the mountain complex as a whole.⁷⁷

Meiji reforms in education also stimulated changes in the training of Kôyasan's priests. After the model of Western university education, with its aggressive historical criticism, Japanese Buddhist priests began to study the classical Buddhist languages, Sanskrit and Pali, and for the first time gain an adequate grasp of Buddhism's Indian origins. Kôyasan was in the vanguard of much of this new scholarly emphasis, reinforcing its past reputation as one of the most important centers of Buddhist study and publication. Kôyasan University was established in 1926, and later the Milkkyô Bunka Kenkyûsho ("Research Institute of Esoteric Buddhist Culture"). In the latter decades of the twentieth century scholars from around the world began coming to Kôyasan to lecture and to teach, to participate in conferences, to use Kôyasan's research libraries, and to examine its collections of art. In these years Kongôbu-ji and Kôyasan University also increasingly cultivated connections with Western religious institutions, especially with the Roman Catholic Church in Italy.

And then there was the Meiji edict of 1872 outlawing the policy of excluding women from the holy mountain. This edict also announced that henceforward the monks of Kôyasan might eat meat, let their hair grow, and get married. Most of the monks were appalled by these directives (although such practices had long since been adopted by the Pure Land sects), and for years there was a general refusal to conform to any of them. Regularly scheduled "searches for women" were instituted in an attempt to keep the mountain pure. All the same, women gradually began to make an appearance in the valley, and sometimes with official sanction. In 1881 a three-day ceremony sponsored by the empress brought in so many women that a number of them had to be accommo-

dated overnight in regular temple halls. Increasingly women, usually disguised as boys, entered the valley to work as day laborers or to gather wood, herbs, and mushrooms in the forest. As enforcement of *nyûin-kinzai* continued to slacken, women who were members of the families of monks (including some monks' wives) entered the valley for brief visits. The wives of the townspeople also came. Finally, in 1906, a year after Japan's military victory over Russia, Kongôbu-ji officially announced that women no longer were to be excluded from Kôyasan. They could come and stay on for as long as they wished. The mountain had held out against the government's 1872 edict, hit or miss, for thirty-four years.

Once family life became commonplace, schools were opened for the children and appropriate new businesses established. Some of the old ruses for importing forbidden products were abandoned. In the past, pedlars would show up periodically with such products as "white egg-plant" and "used nails"—that is, hen's eggs and small dried fish. Now one could purchase openly all sorts of animal products, edible and otherwise, and also previously prohibited pungent spices and "stinking vegetables." Kôyasan remained a temple town, but increasingly a lay person could live the life of a typical Japanese there.⁷⁸

One thing did not change. Kôyasan still was vulnerable to devastating fires. In March 1888 fire broke out on two successive days, burning in all seventy-seven monasteries and seventy lay houses. And this time there was no place to go to seek economic resources for rebuilding. At a specially convened meeting in 1891 the governing priests decided to reduce the number of active monasteries. Only one hundred and thirty would be permitted to continue. The remaining several hundred would be abandoned and destroyed.⁷⁹

The few Western visitors who came to Kôyasan in the early decades of the twentieth century give witness to the mountain's poverty. Many of the temple halls and especially the houses of the laity were in a deteriorated condition. Several small halls in the Garan court were no more than dilapidated storage sheds. In the Okunoin the old Lantern Hall at Kôbô Daishi's tomb was slowly rotting, its interior, hidden by a grating, too dark for the eye to penetrate. As an economy, only a few score lanterns were kept burning at any one time.

In the 1930s, however, some major reconstruction was begun, not as a sign of affluence, for Japan was then in a deep economic depression,

but as a gesture of religious renewal and hope. Kôyasan's present Kondô, with its elegantly understated design and decor, was completed in 1932. The Daitô, for nearly a century no more than a low mound of charred foundation stones, was gloriously rebuilt in 1937 with a frame of concrete and steel. This achievement was hailed in Buddhist circles nationwide as a major sign of Buddhist revival.

During World War II, when Kôyasan served as a military training base, no material improvements could be attempted, nor was there any significant rebuilding in the years of the American Occupation.⁸⁰ However, following the "economic miracle" of the 1950s Kôyasan was able to begin a program of new construction, much of it with an eye to serving the increasing numbers of pilgrims and tourists. An administration building was added to Kongôbu-ji, now the headquarters of a newly established national and international Kôyasan Shingon Sect.⁸¹ In 1981 a large Teaching and Training Hall was added to Daishi Kyôkai, the center for propagation of the Shingon faith among the laity. The Reihôkan Museum of Buddhist art was expanded in 1984. The massive Daimon gate at the western entrance was renovated. A new Lantern Hall was built before Kôbô Daishi's tomb, followed a short time later by a companion hall to house the overflow of memorial lamps. Kôyasan University was largely rebuilt, as was Senshû-gakuin, the seminary for priests. A new seminary for women was completed in 1987. The sidewalks and fences in the area of the Garan, Kongôbu-ji, and the Reihôkan were upgraded, and storefronts set back along much of the valley's main east-west street so that pedestrians could walk more safely and comfortably. Near the end of the twentieth century a large two-story parking garage and bus-parking facility was erected at the entrance to the shorter path to the Okunoin. Throughout these decades many of Kôyasan's *shukubô* temples were expanded, some to the point where they could house, feed, and bathe more than two hundred overnight guests. A large number of lay residences on the mountain, many of them notorious firetraps, were replaced. Within the Garan itself during the mid-1990s the ancient Fudô-dô was totally dismantled, repaired, and lovingly reassembled, and the central Daitô fully renovated both inside and out. The three-day celebration of the reopening of the latter was attended by more than twenty-three thousand religious and lay people attracted from all over the nation. In 2004 Kôyasan was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List as a

sacred site on the ancient Kii pilgrimage route (along with Yoshino-Omine to the east and the Kumano Sanzen to the south).

Today at Kôyasan a recorded voice on the bus loudspeaker announces to arriving visitors that they are entering the "most prosperous Buddhist town in the Kinki area."⁸² This description no doubt is accurate. Kôyasan enters the twenty-first century with a well-maintained, even affluent, physical appearance, and with its spiritual goals seemingly intact. It continues to be an important pilgrimage destination, a major center for religious training (of both clergy and laity), a famed repository of the nation's dead, and the venue for some of Japanese Buddhism's oldest and most significant liturgical practices. The number of visitors from overseas increases steadily (now estimated at ten thousand annually). Some of these foreign visitors are known to return to Kôyasan each year as part of their personal devotional life. One Western specialist on Japanese pilgrimages has written of Kôyasan, "If I had only a day to visit Japan, this is where I'd come. Kôyasan breathes power and beauty. It is the very best of classical Japan."⁸³ Kôyasan has survived.